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# LETTERS TO AND FROM ROME.

# LETTERS

# TO AND FROM ROME

IN THE YEARS

A.D. 61, 62, AND 63.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

BY

C. V. S.

111772

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London:

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,

HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

MDCCCLXXIII.

00111772

The following letters speak for themselves. They have been selected from a much larger number, principally because they illustrate the manner in which the character of our Lord and that of the early Christian Church were regarded by persons who only saw them from the outside. There is also one letter from a follower of St. Paul.

January, 1869.

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# LETTERS TO AND FROM ROME

IN THE YEARS

A.D. 61, 62, AND 63.

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## LETTER I.

FROM LUCIUS POSTUMIUS AT ROME TO SEPTIMIUS VARO AT JERUSALEM.

Your letter informing me of your having been ordered to Jerusalem, reached me a few days ago by favour of the Prefect. The Jews can scarcely be a pleasant people to be quartered among, though I should fancy they are a little more respectable at home than abroad. We have them here again; for they have crept back to the City, little by little, as the vigilance of the Prætor relaxed, or I suppose I should say, as the Emperor grew careless as to the enforcement of the decree of banishment, and now I believe they are as numerous as ever. It is unphilosophical, but I cannot quite help a feeling of repugnance whenever I am brought into contact with them. They are supple and fawning, ready to sell any-

thing you want, from poison to charms for procuring dreams, and from diamond ear-drops to hair-tweezers, and equally accommodating in the services they render, and yet they will neither eat nor drink with you, and seem as though they fancied your very touch would pollute them. I doubt if they would have any scruple in cutting all our throats if they dared. I can scarcely believe what people here tell of them, and yet I don't know why I should doubt it. At any rate, it is currently reported that at their great annual festival at the vernal equinox they immolate a child under two years old, and after marking their own faces and the door of the room with his blood, eat the flesh raw, with unleavened bread. It is said that this is to celebrate some old escape of the people, when they slew a number of children before starting, partly for revenge, and partly to help their escape by distracting the attention of their pursuers. Possibly, the whole story is a fable; but it is just such an one as would be likely to spring up among those who have any dealings with them.

Singularly enough, however, I have actually become acquainted with a Jew, and cannot help liking the man, and taking an interest in his opinions. His name is Paulus, and I imagine he is connected in some way, possibly by the enfranchisement of himself or of his father, with the Æmilians. He is a sort of prisoner, though having a good deal of freedom, being rather kept under inspection than in actual custody. He was sent here from Judæa by P. Festus, because he had appealed to the Emperor against some sentence of the Procurator as to his conduct in a tumult which he was charged

with exciting. According to his own account, he was innocent of all offence, having nearly been the victim of a disorderly mob stirred up against him by some of his countrymen upon some unintelligible ground, that he had, or had not, done or said something connected with their religion. It was an accident that first made me acquainted with him. He had been attacked by some Jews in the open space between the Prætorium and the city, just as I was passing. Seeing who were the assailants, I directed my servants to interfere; and when they had rescued the man, I was astonished to find that he was a Jew also. He seemed old and feeble, and in spite of his being a Jew I could not help feeling some pity for him; and as we had only just passed the Prætorium, I turned back and accompanied him home. As we were walking to his lodgings, I inquired as to the cause of the fray, and from his replies gathered that it had something to do with their religion. It appears that the Jews are in almost daily expectation of some great deliverer who is to come from the East, and not only to restore their national independence, but to overthrow the Empire, and transfer the dominion of the world from Rome to Jerusalem; and that then there is to be such an era of peace and plenty as that of which poor Virgilius dreamed, but which seems to my prosaic soul to be further off than ever. The deliverer is to be called Χριστος, or the anointed. It seems, for one cannot speak with any confidence upon the subject, that the man of whom I was speaking, Paulus, differs from the rest of the Jews, partly in supposing that this Χριστος is to be one Jesus, who was executed for sedition in Jerusalem when Pilatus was procurator there,

and partly (and this appears to be the great cause of offence) in holding that other nations beside the Jews may be admitted into this kingdom. Can you imagine anything more absurd? It reminds one of the fable of the two peasants who quarrelled and began fighting as to the amount of the dowry to be paid with the daughter of the one on her marriage with the son of the other, when neither of them had a child or was even married. One would say it was time enough to dispute who should be admitted to their expected kingdom when it is actually established. If they could be persuaded to wait for this, I suspect they would be at peace for a long time.

However, I have had many conversations with my new friend, and what I have told you above is the result. He is a singular compound of shrewdness and common sense on the one hand, and of enthusiasm and credulity on the other. Seeing that I listened to him with some interest, he began attempting to convince me—firstly, that a dead man, the Jesus I mentioned before, had been actually raised to life again, and taken up to the heavens!!! and secondly, that if I would believe this, and submit to some form of lustration, I should be entitled to admission into the kingdom which this Jesus is soon to return to the earth to establish. I told him that his story of the translation of Jesus to the sky might do for the multitude who believed in the translation of Hercules and other heroes, but that I thought that all men of sense had outgrown such fables. Upon this he assured me that he himself saw this Jesus in the sky on some occasion, and besides this, that sometimes one and sometimes another of the men that had been companions

of Jesus in his lifetime also saw him, and that the fact was confirmed to himself by something he heard when he was taken bodily up into the sky—the third crystalline sphere, I believe. In justice, I should say, however, that he is not quite certain whether this last was not a vision instead of a real corporeal removal. So that you see on this side of his character he is absurd enough. But then his ethical precepts and his views of the nature of his God, Iahbe I think he calls him, have a strange force and charm. I am not very impressionable, at least I flatter myself that I am not, and perhaps you may not agree with me; but I confess that while listening to him I have been sometimes stimulated and sometimes awed almost beyond my power of control. And the pictures he draws of the peace and purity that are to exist in the new kingdom, his denunciations of injustice and oppression, as well as of some of the more pleasing and seductive vices, if vices they are to be called, have a wondrous fascination. And this has brought me back to him more than once, and I suppose will do so again.

But then what he says about this Jesus has recalled a dim boyish recollection of a story told by my father, who, as you know, was quartered at Jerusalem when Pilatus was procurator, of some Jew whose name I think was Jesus, who was condemned and put to death by crucifixion. I cannot remember for what offence: but I know that my father thought he was rather hardly dealt with. But then he had strange liberal notions upon these subjects. According to his view, the man was a harmless enthusiast, who might safely have been left at large, and I remember he was much struck with his firmness and the quiet

dignity with which he received the announcement of his sentence. But in those days,—and I suppose, from all I hear, it is much the same now,—it was hardly safe to allow any movement in Judæa, however apparently harmless, to gather head; and from what I remember of Pilatus he was not a man to trouble himself with any nice distinctions. I fancy the prisoner had called himself king, or possibly he had only talked publicly of this mysterious kingdom; and it was thought safer to put him to death, even though he might have no actual intention to rebel, than to run the risk of letting him be at large. I cannot remember precisely what I heard on the subject, but the effort to recal it has excited my interest. Would it make too great a demand upon your time to ask if you will try to procure for me particulars of this Jesus, if such were his name, or of a Jesus, for there certainly was a person of that name crucified under Pilatus, and whether there is any sect in Jerusalem that entertains the sort of belief in him that my new friend here does? I hardly know whether I ought to apologize for giving you this task, for I suspect you must often find it difficult to fill up your time in such a place, and you know the interest I take in these matters. In this case it is augmented by the idea that this very man whom Paulus expects to found his kingdom is the same in whose favour my boyish sympathies were so strongly excited. Hail, and farewell!

## LETTER II.

SEPTIMIUS VARO IN JERUSALEM TO LUCIUS POSTUMIUS AT ROME.

HAIL! Hail! Hail! O most credulous of mortals! For it is surely a greater sign of credulity in you to believe half what a Jew tells you, than for him to believe the whole of it. He has an hereditary title to his absurdities, while you——! And in spite of your disclaimer, I can see that you are already more than half convinced by your new acquaintance. However, this topic will only interest you as so many others have done, until you are again summoned to some active command. Once in arms against the Dacians or the Germans, and all these fancies engendered by want of something to do will vanish. In the meantime rely upon my friendship to procure for you all the information I can.

I knew your friend Paulus. I was present at the riot that led to his arrest, and fully expected we should have had to call out the whole garrison to quell it; and I was afterwards present when he was examined by Lysanias. It appears that he is a Roman citizen, free by birth, and I did not trouble myself as to his parentage. But he is a Jew—of that there can be no doubt. I don't think the people could have been quite so bitter against him if he

had not been of their blood. The pretext for the disturbance was, that he had in some way violated the sanctity of the temple—though I could never make out in what way, but your account helps me to understand something as to the feeling against him. Here, however, there is such a confusion of sects, and such a babblement of opinions, that I cannot pretend to understand anything about them. Among the sects there is, I believe, one that expects the Jesus of whom your friend talks, and I hear that it is one of the narrowest and most fanatical of them all. But this is a secret society connected in some way with an older sect, that of the "Washers," founded by one John, and so called because the members on admission are bound to submit to some process of lustration, which is supposed to purify them from all defilement. Such is the rumour. These men guard their mysteries like the Orphics and Bacchics, or our own votaries of the Bona Dea. No one who is not a member can know, nor dare any member reveal, the true nature of their rites of initiation or worship.

I have seen more of the Jews than you have, and I can believe anything as to their secret atrocities. They may be more respectable here—upon that I offer no opinion—but certainly they are not more amiable. Their hatred of us is really frantic. One is half disposed at first to have a sort of sympathy for them; for certainly I should not like to see Jews masters at Rome, and therefore I can understand their not liking to see Romans masters at Jerusalem. But what I cannot forgive is their treachery and faithlessness. They have no sense of manliness or honour. If they will rise, let them. I am quite willing

that their Iahbe should be pitted against our Jove. The eagles that have flown over so many lands are not likely to be beaten back by the God of this petty people. But if they believe that national independence is worth fighting for, and that their God can help them—in the name of Hercules let them try. There will be something exhilarating in a fair open fight, and our swords have hewn their way through denser columns than they are likely to raise ; and if I am mistaken, and they can beat us on a fair field—even so be it. There are worse deaths, or rather there is none better, than to die fighting for the grand old cause. But to be met with seeming courtesy and secret hate—to feel that you dare not stray beyond the most open thoroughfare without arms, and keeping a constant watch lest an assassin should lurk in the shadow of a pillar or behind the foliage of a vine—to feel that even the smiles of a pretty girl (and by Venus they do sometimes smile gloriously, nor are all false), may be only lures to lead you into an ambush—to learn from time to time that one, and another, and another of your comrades has strolled out and never returned, and that no trace of him can be found, make you not afraid, but suspicious and vindictive. During the five years that our legion has been quartered in this country we have lost seventeen of our men, without being able to learn anything as to what has become of them. Of course the story is that they have deserted—for it is not considered politic to allow suspicion to appear when there is no proof—but if so, they have been marvellously successful in escaping, and I believe it is just as likely that they have been offered in sacrifice in the temple. We cannot search for them, as we

are forbidden to enter the temple itself; and even if we could, I am told there are vaults under it where hundreds might be safely concealed.

However, I must admit they have some excuse; for our legionaries give provocation enough. If they were treated with cordiality, it might be different; for though rough, they are not wantonly cruel. But a scowl or a curse is very apt to provoke a blow—and what is worse, our men take a pleasure in parading their authority, and in provoking some display of feeling that may give them an excuse for striking. We have had many street conflicts in consequence, and in all these, as a matter of course, our soldiers, owing to their superiority in arms and discipline, eventually got the better—generally with little loss, though occasionally we have had to turn out the whole force to extricate those first engaged. Numbers of the Jews have been killed in these encounters, and some who were taken prisoners have been crucified for the part they have taken. So that, after all, we can hardly wonder that they should seek to take revenge upon any solitary legionary who may fall into their hands.

As you see, I cannot approach this topic without being carried away with it, and it has now led me from my immediate object, which was to apprize you of the difficulty of obtaining the information you seek. I will nevertheless do what I can. I despatch this letter because I have an opportunity just now, and do not know when I shall have another. Hail, and farewell!

I had just written this when I received a visit from our old colleague Sabinus, now secretary to the Procurator. I naturally spoke to him as to your request. He tells me

that he has seen a diary kept by Paulinus, who filled his office when Pilatus was procurator, which he believes contains some entries on the subject, and he has promised to do his best to procure it. If he is successful, you shall have whatever information it contains. He has also promised to search the register of his office to ascertain if there really was any Jesus crucified during Pilatus' administration—so that, thanks to him, I appear to be in a fair way of obtaining the information you seek in a complete form, and with less trouble than I expected. I will not detain this letter, but will send all the materials I can collect by the first opportunity.

## LETTER III.

FROM S. VARO AT JERUSALEM, TO L. POSTUMIUS AT ROME.

HAIL, etc.—I have been longer than I expected, before writing to you; but I have had many other things to think of besides hunting up the traces of an obscure rebel, for such your Jesus appears to have been.—I have, however, kept the subject in mind, and have managed to procure tolerably full particulars. But in the midst of my inquiries, intelligence reached us of some contemplated movement to the south of Jerusalem. The whole country is infested by armed bands, who appear for a moment at one point, and after levying contributions on some unpopular person, disperse as soon as a force is sent against them, to reappear in a short time at some distant spot. And as the people sympathise with them, we can gain no intelligence as to their movements. But this was stated to be a more formidable affair, and to be the prelude to some organised insurrection. It was therefore determined to attempt to surprise them, and I was selected to head the party. Three centuries were mustered just at midnight, and we left the city under a trusty guide. The spot indicated was about ten miles from the city, and we arranged our march so as to reach it just before dawn. Our movements, it would appear, must

have been observed; for we found the birds flown. We seized some arms and forage, which apparently they had not had time to carry away, and burned the village, which was deserted. As far as I could judge, there must have been more than five hundred of them, and I almost wonder they did not make a stand. If they had, they might have given us some trouble; for the Jews are brave enough after their fashion. It would have been useless to pursue them, even had we known the place of their retreat, and we might have been led beyond support. We accordingly returned to Jerusalem, and I could fancy there was an air of triumph in the people we met at the idea of our having been baulked of our prey. To my mind, however, the retreat of the rebels was the worst feature in the whole affair. It seems to show that they are maturing some plan which they fear to derange by a premature collision, and I should not be surprised at any moment to hear that the whole land is in arms against us. When that is the case, we shall have fighting enough. We have only two legions in the whole country, and they could muster at the least fifty thousand men, undisciplined no doubt, and imperfectly armed, but quite enough to give us full occupation. If we were all together, we might laugh at them; but it would never do to withdraw the outlying garrisons, and they might cut off many detachments in detail. At present, indeed, all is seemingly quiet; for we reckon the robbers as nothing. But everything proves that disaffection is spreading, and we have reason to believe that the people are secretly organizing themselves. Time will show what we have to expect, but meanwhile I have been pretty fully occupied.

But to return to the subject of your inquiry. In the first place, I have ascertained beyond doubt that the Jesus in whom your friend believes, is the one who was crucified by order of Pilatus, and that there is a sect here who believe that he was taken up into heaven, and that he is to come back again to expel the Romans, and set up his kingdom in Jerusalem. They are said to number many thousands. This is all that I can say about them; for I can only learn that such a sect exists.

I have seen the register of the proceedings against Jesus, but this tells us no more than that he was a native of Nazareth, in Galilee, thirty-one years old, a carpenter by trade, accused of having attempted to excite a revolt, condemned and ordered to be crucified; and then there is a memorandum that the sentence was immediately executed; and this is the only Jesus crucified by order of the Procurator, during the whole of Pilatus' administration. This, however, tells you scarcely any more than you knew previously; but Paulinus' diary, which Sabinus managed to procure for me, has thrown some light upon the subject. It is minute, not to say tedious, and I could not read it all. I have employed a scribe to go through it, and copy all he could find bearing upon the subject—so that when we meet again you will have something to pay me, unless I should find some commission for you to execute on my behalf. I have nothing to add, excepting that all continues quiet, and that I have received the extracts from the diary, which I forward by the same messenger who takes this. Hail, and farewell!

## EXTRACTS FROM DIARY.

RUMOURS of a new pretender, one John. He professes to be only a religious reformer, but he is organizing his followers, and preaches the kingdom of Iahbe the God of the Jews, and this means that they are to rise against us, and regain their independence, putting all Romans to the sword. The Procurator has sent letters to Herod, calling his attention to these proceedings, and suggesting the propriety of stopping them at once. It appears that great numbers have already joined John, and after being initiated into the society have been sent back to their homes, so that the whole country will soon be filled with conspirators, if he is not arrested.

News that Herod has seized John, and sent him to prison. There was no resistance, but a good deal of excitement, so that it was thought best to send him to Machærus to be out of the way of a rescue. He will for the present be safe there, but it was a mistake to spare him. Had he been within our jurisdiction, we should have made short work with him. Our Procurator is not a man to be trifled with, or to trifle in such matters. The followers of John have dispersed for a moment, but no one can tell what plots they are hatching. They are said to be most numerous in Galilee.

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Fresh troubles in Galilee. A carpenter, Jesus, one of John's disciples, has begun to preach the kingdom of Iahbe or of Heaven, which is the cant Jewish phrase for rebellion. It means Judæa for the Jews, and death

to every one else. The new pretender claims to have the power of exorcising demons, and of curing all kinds of diseases, and hundreds believe in him. It is noticeable that, in times of excitement, people are ready to believe anything, even that they see marvels performed, such as in old days the gods might work, but which now certainly are impossible. Needless to say that we hear of no specific cures, but only general rumours. At present the movement is insignificant, but it will not do to allow it to gather head.

Pilatus has just received letters from Herod. Fearing that the new movement might have for its object the rescue of John, and having reason to suspect that John was at the bottom of it, for it was discovered that messengers had passed between him and Jesus, he ordered John to be beheaded, and the sentence was executed at once. At the same time he attempted to seize Jesus, but he had apparently received some warning, and has for the time concealed himself. There has been no search after him, for he had not formed any party, and it is thought sufficient to have stopped his mouth for the present. It is uncertain what effect the news of John's execution will produce here. If we may believe rumour, he had a great many disciples, but I suspect their strength has been broken by the death of their leader. The Procurator, however, has taken all precautions against a rising, but I do not myself expect any.

I have this morning had a long talk with Ananus. He describes the state of feeling among his countrymen as really dangerous. I expressed my surprise, for at least Pilatus is more tolerant and less capricious than the

old Herod, or even Archelaus. Any man who will be peaceful and obedient is safe, which is more than could be said under either of their reigns; and one tribute is all that is demanded—there are no after exactions. He admitted this, but reminded me that we were foreigners and worshippers of other gods, and that therefore, if our rule were even milder and more just than it was, it could not be otherwise than unpopular. But he said the popular feeling was just now agitated by the resuscitation of some old prophecies, something like the Sibylline Oracles at Rome, only instead of being kept by a college, they are distributed among the people, and read to them in their synagogues at their seventh-day assemblies. From these, he says, it is believed that the termination of the line of their native princes in the person of Archelaus, and the annexation of Judæa to the Empire, are signs of the coming of some Divine being in the clouds of heaven, who is to drive us out with great slaughter, and then to reign as king in Jerusalem. But they expect his coming to be preceded by some prophet who is to organize an insurrection; and so infatuated are they, that great numbers believed John, and some even believe Jesus, to be that prophet. He is quite sure, that if either of them had proposed to put himself at the head of the people, and march against Jerusalem, hundreds, and in the case of John, probably thousands, would have been ready to follow him. Jesus, however, he regards as a peaceful enthusiast, harmless in intention, though necessarily dangerous in the present excited state of popular feeling. John, he believes, had ulterior designs, and would have been troublesome if his career had not been cut short.

He therefore advises forbearance and watchfulness, to do nothing to provoke a rising, but to be ready to crush it out instantly; for if once allowed to gather head, it is impossible to say how far it might reach. He admits that the Procurator has been very fair on the whole, but he is disposed to blame him for not sufficiently consulting the prejudices of the people in little things.

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Ananus has been to me again. The great Jewish festival of the vernal equinox will take place in a month, and he has received private intelligence from Galilee, that Jesus has returned to Capernaum, his former head-quarters, with the presumed intention of coming up to the feast. It is not quite known where he has concealed himself, but it is believed he must have left the country probably for Tyre. He is living quietly, and, as much as possible, avoiding publicity; but his followers, of whom he has ten or a dozen always about him, have, it appears, let fall some expressions from which it is conjectured that he has not abandoned his original projects, but that he intends this time to try Jerusalem. It seems they are quite mysterious, throwing out hints of some great event to happen when he comes. I gather that they expect a repetition of the old Tarquinian marvel, that something is to descend from heaven, and point him out to the people, either as the prophet who is to precede their expected deliverer, or as the very deliverer himself. Ananus suspects that Jesus must be in communication with the followers of John in this city, and is concerting measures with them, but can get no information on the

subject. He, however, promises to learn all he can, and to keep us informed, and there is plenty of time to make preparations.

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Ananus has been here again quite mysterious. I could make nothing of him at first, for he wanted to see the Procurator; but as Pilatus was out, he was compelled to wait, and was full of hints. He got tired of waiting at last, and then told me the object of his visit. He said he could not mention his authority, but I have no doubt he has been in communication with the friends of Jesus within the city. Jesus, he says, has entered Judæa, and proposes to make his entry into the city to-morrow or the day after, and it is to be public after a fashion. It appears that one of the old oracles he told me of before has foretold that the Divine deliverer is to enter Jerusalem riding upon a donkey, and he understands Jesus intends to do this, and that a number of people will be collected to meet and welcome him. He is assured, however, and believes, that the whole intention is peaceful, and his object was to induce the Procurator to wink at the affair, and while taking due precautions against a disturbance, to abstain from interference so long as all goes on quietly. I really believe that he himself is half disposed to expect some Divine manifestation, but his alleged reason was, that any attempt to disperse the procession would almost certainly provoke resistance, and that the present was a most inopportune time for any collision between the troops and the people, since the number of Jews in the city is very much greater than usual, and therefore the results might be really danger-

ous. On the last point I agreed with him, and I said that of course I should be very sorry to see a number of peaceful men slaughtered for no purpose, but that I was sure it was not safe to allow any meeting of such a seemingly seditious character to be held, and that I felt sure such would be the view of the Procurator. However, I promised to mention the matter to Pilatus when he returned, and to let Ananus know the result.

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As I expected, the Procurator is resolute not to allow any public demonstration of the kind proposed. He laughs at the idea of danger, and says that it would be as much as his office was worth to permit a seditious meeting, as this would be regarded at Rome, to take place with impunity. He has directed me to tell Ananus that if there is any meeting which threatens the peace of the city, or is offensive to the majesty of the Emperor, he will disperse it at all hazards, and seize and punish the ringleaders. Possibly he is right, but at all events I have nothing to do but to obey.

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The high priest came this evening, accompanied by Jacobus and Ananus, to see the Procurator. He did not like being disturbed, but after a time growled out a consent to see them. When I introduced them, and was about to retire, he ordered me to stay. They were anything but easy, but after a little while the high priest began. The subject was the proposed public entry of Jesus. He repeated nearly the same arguments used by

Ananus this morning, but took rather a different ground. He said there could be no doubt that many who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee, and many of those who were arranging the procession, really believed that there would be some sign from the skies pointing out Jesus as the king of Jerusalem. He ridiculed the idea himself, but argued that on this very ground it would be well not to interfere, since the inevitable disappointment of this expectation would at once stamp Jesus as an impostor in the general opinion, and destroy his credit with the people. And he pointed out that while the followers of Jesus and the crowd were animated with this expectation, they would be sure to resent any interference, and would fight with an enthusiasm that might in some degree atone for their inferiority in arms and discipline; and that they would, at any rate, resist stubbornly to the last, while there were thousands of disaffected Jews in the city who would be sure to avail themselves of the opportunity to attempt a general rising. And further, that the victory, though certain to be bloody, would be useless, since he was sure no rising was intended; and though there might be some cries having a seditious sound, there would be nothing on the face of the procession having that character. Jesus, he said, was a man of peace. He was half crazy by brooding on the prophecies in which all the Jews believed, but in everything he had said hitherto he inculcated peace and submission as duties, and had not even attempted to form any society. And he added, that if the Procurator should ultimately be of opinion that his being at large endangered the public tranquillity, there would be abund-

ant opportunities of seizing him without the danger of provoking a possible rebellion. These views were supported by both the others; and at length, though with very great difficulty, Pilatus was prevailed upon to promise that so long as the crowd was peaceful he would not interfere; but he added he would have all the troops under arms, and would march them against the people on the first symptom of a disturbance. With this assurance they were satisfied, and retired. Pilatus detained me for a short time, as though he had something to communicate, but at last he smiled sardonically, and dismissed me without a word.

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The day has passed over quietly. The whole of the garrison were under arms soon after daybreak, and remained so through the morning, swearing by a hundred gods, and praying that some disturbance might occur; but they were kept in their quarters, and I also was kept in, so that I saw and heard nothing. Shortly after noon a messenger from the high priest came to say that the crowd had dispersed peacefully, and that Jesus had left the city accompanied by a few of his immediate followers, but it was not known whither. Just before supper Ananus came to me, and told me what had occurred. He did not see much himself, but he had been receiving reports all the morning, so that he had a tolerably complete history of the whole affair. Jesus, it appeared, had come up the day before from Jericho, with a large following, and had passed the night at Bethany. From this place he sent forward some of his followers to the city to procure his

donkey, following them slowly. About an hour before noon the men and the donkey met him just outside the gate, and he at once mounted. Immediately the people who had accompanied him from Galilee, and a large number who had joined them from Jerusalem, saluted him as the Son of David (who, I am told, was a sort of Jewish Servius) and king of the Jews. In this manner he entered the city, and rode on slowly till he reached the temple, the crowd being every moment swelled by bystanders, some supporters, but the majority apparently only attracted by curiosity. On arriving at the temple he nearly provoked a riot by driving out the poultry dealers and money-brokers. It was perhaps fortunate that we have nothing to do inside the temple, or this might have been taken as an act of violence requiring to be repressed, and in that case there would have been a fearful fight; for all would have joined to resist our interference. Ananus says the men who were driven out were half ashamed of themselves, and besides a little awed by the crowd that followed Jesus, and seemed disposed to support him; so that they made no resistance. One need hardly say there was no sign from heaven, and the crowd dispersed rather sheepishly, and apparently with their faith in Jesus very rudely shaken. He must, too, have been bitterly disappointed himself. No one knows where he has gone, but he must have many secret adherents in the city and its neighbourhood, and he would have no difficulty in finding a refuge. Ananus thinks he shall hear no more of him, and is quite certain that if he venture to show himself again, there will be no risk in seizing him if he prove dangerous or troublesome.

I have had to copy a despatch from the Procurator. He is very doubtful what view will be taken of his forbearance yesterday, and half disposed to regret that he allowed himself to be persuaded. However, to have slaughtered an unarmed mob might be as displeasing to Cæsar, if in a merciful mood, as to have permitted a seditious assembly without dispersing it might be if he were suffering from the black bile, and he will probably attach great weight to the representations of the High Priest, who has given good proof of his loyalty, and whom the Procurator has been told to consult in doubtful matters. Pilatus has put prominently forward the character given of Jesus as a man of peace, and the entirely peaceful nature of the procession, and has stated that if there should be any renewal of the attempt, or even if Jesus should again put himself forward as King of the Jews, he will prevent the possibility of any rising in his favour by having him seized and executed. If, however, the disappointment of his own expectations, and of those of his followers, should lead Jesus to retire to Galilee, or even if he remain quiet in Jerusalem, no notice will be taken of his attempt. But after all it must be unpleasant to have to admit to the Emperor that you have permitted what may easily be represented as a seditious gathering of the people, at which treasonable cries were uttered, and which was, on the face of it, a defiance of his authority. No wonder, therefore, the Procurator is somewhat embarrassed, and doubtful of the manner in which his despatch will be received; but he has too many enemies here, among men of all parties, to make it safe to pass over the matter in silence. Some account of it is

sure to reach Rome, and the only safe way is to tell his own tale first.

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The High Priest has had a private interview with the Procurator. I fancy it had reference to Jesus; for I hear that he has shown himself every day publicly in the temple, and that he is always surrounded by a sort of body-guard of ten or a dozen; and though he has done nothing overt as yet, it appears that the people are still inclined to believe in him, and he seems to be waiting his opportunity. I have at present no means of obtaining information; for Ananus is away, and I have no one else whom I can ask. The place is getting fuller every day, and no one can foresee how far any movement might spread, if once set going; and this makes it difficult to arrest a person who is seemingly peaceful and inoffensive, and dangerous to allow him to be at large, when it is believed that he is abusing his liberty to spread disaffection. He professes, I understand, to preach submission to Rome, but of course only till the time comes to rise against us. I begin myself to think that the first impulse of the Procurator to disperse the crowd on the occasion of his entry into Jerusalem, and to have him seized and crucified at once, was the wisest. That opportunity has been lost, and it now only remains to seize the next. It is all very well to say that he is peaceful, but his peace consists in parading himself before the people as their promised deliverer, and thus inviting them to rise in his behalf, and no one can tell from day to day whether this tacit invitation will not be responded to.

Last night Pilatus sent for me just as I was sitting down to supper. He wished me to accompany a body of the officers of the High Priest, who were to effect the seizure of Jesus; and as he was in a good temper, he condescended to tell me what he had done. He said that on the day following the public entry of Jesus he had received a report that although much disappointed by the result, Jesus had determined not to abandon his purpose; and that though he did not intend to initiate any measure himself, his followers were active in endeavouring to stir up the people to some demonstration in his favour. This report was confirmed by his subsequent conduct. In order to keep his pretensions before the people, and afford an opportunity for their recognition, he had presented himself in public every day; and though he had not yet succeeded, it was impossible to say when he might. The majority of the people of Jerusalem itself, indeed, were disposed to look upon him as an impostor; but there were thousands from a distance, among whom were many notoriously disaffected characters, who would be likely enough to take up his cause, whether they believed in him or not. It would, however, be hazardous to seize him in public; for there was just that sort of interest attaching to him that would be sure to produce some tumult, which, under the circumstances, it was desirable to avoid, and Pilatus had accordingly instructed the High Priest to endeavour to discover the means of arresting him in private. This at first proved impossible, since it was not known precisely where he went at night, and it was believed that he changed his quarters for the purpose of eluding any attempt at seizure. In this dilemma one of his immediate

followers had turned traitor, and had offered to guide a party to his place of concealment. This offer had been accepted, and the visit of the High Priest yesterday was to inform Pilatus of the arrangement, and to ask his assistance if necessary. Jesus is never quite alone, and in spite of all precautions some of the party might be able to rouse the neighbourhood. The Procurator approved of the measure, and fifty men were to be told off for the service; but they were not to show themselves unless there appeared to be any resistance to make it needful. They were to leave their quarters an hour after sunset, and to proceed to the palace of the High Priest, from which they were to start a short time after the High Priest's officers. I was to arrange with the officer in command the signal for his advance, which I was to give if necessary, and then to go to the palace, and remain till the needful preparations were made, when I was to accompany the party who were to effect the seizure. The Procurator laughed as he advised me to take care to have my supper before starting, for I should get nothing worth eating from the High Priest, even if I were allowed to eat in his house. I did not fail to follow his advice.

On reaching the palace of the High Priest, I was delighted to find Ananus; for he is the only person from whom I am able to get any reliable account of what is going on among his people, and I availed myself of the opportunity to learn all he could tell me on the subject of Jesus. As, however, he had left the city on the day after the entry, and had only returned that morning, he had seen nothing himself, though he had heard full particulars from others. After all, there was not much beyond what I had been

told by the Procurator. The principal point was that Jesus, while appealing to the people, had offended the chief popular leaders—the Pharisees as they are called (which I fancy means Purists)—and that through their influence the enthusiam excited in his behalf had almost entirely faded away; so much was this the case, that for the last two days he had not ventured to show himself in public. His adherents, however, were still active, and no one could foretell what his next movement might be, or even whether he might not by some bold stroke rekindle the popular enthusiasm, and induce the people to rise in his behalf. One main cause of the disfavour into which he had fallen was his own inertness. Had he, even the day after his entrance into Jerusalem, raised his own standard, half the city might have rallied round him; but the people got tired of waiting, and began to look upon him as an impostor or a coward; and feeling this, it is possible that as a last desperate resource he may attempt a rising, calling upon the people in the name of Iahbe, their national god. What seems to render such a course probable is that the informer, whose name is Judas, described a scene that took place only two nights before; in which, at the house of one of his adherents, he was formally anointed as king by one of the women attached to the party. It appeared doubtful from his account whether this was done in concert with Jesus, for the purpose of encouraging his followers, or was arranged by some of the leaders among them, for the purpose of rousing him to action. Probably the latter was the case. It seems certain that the popular dissatisfaction with his inactivity is shared by some among his immediate followers, and this indeed seems to be the

chief motive with Judas. He speaks in the tone of a man who had been deceived by being led into a conspiracy, and then deserted; and if there is to be no rising, he has no scruple in denouncing the leader by whom he has been deluded. Ananus says that he really believes the man half expects that when Jesus is actually seized he will display supernatural powers—call down fire from heaven upon his captors, as some of their fabulous heroes are reported to have done, or strike them with blindness or panic. Such a belief is worthy of a Jew; though, after all, I don't know how far we are entitled to laugh at them —seeing what our populace believe, and how ready they are to run after any new superstition.

The party from the garrison came at the appointed time, but we had to wait for our guide. It was necessary that he should not leave Jesus till the last moment, in order that he might know where he was going; and as this was the night of their great feast of unleavened bread, the supper was prolonged till an unusually late hour. Judas, when he came, was in a state of great excitement. He believed that Jesus had in some way become informed of his treachery, which is likely enough, considering the number of his friends in the city, and the impossibility of keeping such an affair quite a secret. He let drop something which gave that impression, and Judas is therefore uncertain whether after all he may not change his intended place of retirement, or collect an armed force to resist the attempt, which would be easy enough. Under these circumstances it was decided to modify our original plan, and let the party from the garrison follow the officers of the high priest closely, not, however, showing themselves,

but so as to be ready to act at once in case of any attempt at resistance; but these precautions were needless. When we reached the place to which Judas conducted us, Jesus was there, with about half a dozen followers. And so far as he was concerned, there was no attempt to escape or resist. He came forward at once, and gave himself up. His followers, indeed, made a show of fight, and one of our party was wounded by a sword cut. Jesus begged them to desist; but what had probably more effect was the appearance of the soldiers, who came up at sound of the fray, and at sight of whom they ran off with all speed. It would have been useless to attempt to follow them in the darkness, and there was no motive for doing so, since deprived of their leader they are quite harmless.

We returned with our prisoner to the palace of the high priest. There was a sitting of the great council of the Jews, and Jesus was to be brought before it, though I can hardly fancy for what purpose, unless to preserve an appearance of independent action. I, however, proceeded at once to the Procurator, and reported all that we had done. He appeared quite satisfied, but I could see there was a half-relenting towards the prisoner. Indeed, he let me know as much; for he said it was a pity that a man who was himself so peaceful and submissive should have allowed himself to be put forward by others as the instrument of their seditious designs, and that if he would only give up the names of those with whom he was acting he might be let go; and even if not, if he were to release a prisoner on the occasion of the feast, as was sometimes the case, it might be Jesus; for we was sure he had not the active

courage that was needed to rebel; though he might have the passive courage to die for his party.

In the morning, as soon as the Procurator could be seen, there was an official report from the High Priest of the arrest of Jesus, and a formal charge against him of having publicly claimed to be king of the Jews, and of having conspired with others to rebel against the Emperor. It appears that when brought before the Council he refused to recede from his pretensions, and asserted, in the most emphatic manner, his claims to sovereignty, so that it would be really dangerous to allow him to be at large. Pilatus directed him at once to be brought before him in the hall of judgment, and as soon as he arrived took his seat. The process was very summary. The accusation was read, and the prisoner was asked what he had to say. He replied that he was the King of the Jews, and that nothing could deprive him of his right, or prevent him from asserting it. The Procurator smiled one of his grim smiles, and said that perhaps being crucified might. There was a great crowd of Jews in the hall, but no one seemed to have any sympathy with Jesus. On the contrary, when he answered Pilatus, there was a universal hoot. Obviously they thought there was something contemptible in a man claiming to be king of the Jews, and not daring to strike a blow in assertion of his claim. And when sentence was pronounced, and he was given over to the executioners, there was not the slightest appearance of dissatisfaction. I must, however, do Jesus the justice to say that he bore himself with calmness and dignity, and that he was apparently a firm believer in his own claim. He

must be somewhat mad. It is impossible otherwise to account for his conduct.

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Last evening two members of the Jewish Council waited upon the Procurator, asking to be allowed to take down the body of Jesus for the purpose of burial. He was in an unusually good humour, and gave the requisite authority almost without a question. He even said that though it had been incumbent upon him, under the circumstances, to put Jesus to death, he should have been well pleased to have been spared the necessity, and that he had no wish to confound him with common criminals, or to deny to his friends such alleviation to their sorrow as might be derived from paying the last honours to him. They expressed themselves to be very grateful, and withdrew.

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To-day Ananus called. He had been to the crucifixion. He says there was an unusual crowd to witness it; for in spite of everything there was a vague expectation that even at the last moment there might be some supernatural interposition in Jesus' behalf. Of course, nothing of the sort occurred; but there must have been something above the common about Jesus to have produced this feeling. He displayed throughout great firmness, without ostentation. He made no appeal to the people, and listened without reply or emotion to their sarcastic speeches. It was impossible to guess what were his own expectations. Perhaps his belief in himself made him

expect some divine appearance to rescue him. Even when fastened to the cross, his firmness did not at once forsake him, but as his strength failed he said something which was understood to be a quotation from one of their poets, upbraiding God for having forsaken him. From this moment he seemed to lose all heart. He visibly sank, and died within three hours from his having been crucified. At first it was thought he had only fainted, but the body became cold, and the look of death was unmistakable. Poor fellow! his was a hard fate—disappointed in his hope—betrayed by his intimate friends—and dying without one word of kindness or sympathy from the crowd that witnessed the crucifixion. However, it is all over now, and I suppose we shall hear no more about him.

## LETTER IV.

FROM LUCIUS POSTUMIUS IN ROME TO SEPTIMIUS VARO IN JERUSALEM.

HAIL, etc. Many thanks for your letter and for the diary, which I have read with great interest. How true it is that our new follies as they seem are only the resuscitation of old ones! Jesus appears to have been a believer in the same kingdom that Paulus now preaches, and his delusion wrought his death; and I should not be surprised if the fate of Paulus is ultimately the same.

Your letter by some accident did not reach Rome for several months; and when it arrived, I was absent, so that I have only just received it. I am very grateful for the trouble you have taken, and hope to be able to prove my gratitude by some service rendered to you.

Since I received your letter, Paulus has been set free, and has left Rome. Some interest was made for him with the Empress, (for he has made many friends here,) which led to his discharge, and as it happened I was able to help him. It was necessary that some one, known to the Prætor, should guarantee his loyalty and good conduct, and he gave my name. I was very glad to be of service to him; for though his imprisonment has only been light, he was liable at any moment to close confinement and

death, and I am satisfied he is, both in principle and in conduct, a peaceful and orderly man. After his release he came to see me, thanking me for my kindness, and telling me of his intention to proceed to Spain. I congratulated him upon his release, and wished him all health and happiness. He then began to renew his attempts to win me over to his belief, and we had quite a long talk. It ended as might be expected. Of course he did not persuade me to join his sect, and equally of course, nothing that I said made any impression upon him. He has allowed his mind for many years to dwell exclusively upon one topic, until he is fairly possessed by it; and as he has been bitterly persecuted by his countrymen on account of it, his opinions and feelings have become tenfold stronger by reason of what he has suffered in their defence, and he is really not quite sane on the subject. He generally exercises great control over himself in my presence, but I have seen him almost rave; and I am told that at their meetings, when only the initiated are present, he falls into a perfect ecstasy, and is full of the dæmon. And yet there is a wonderful coherence in his views, and under some aspects they are unquestionably true. I think that if I were a philosopher I should like to endeavour to elicit the points of correspondence between his scheme and the best parts of the Stoic and Epicurean systems. I can't help fancying that one might by this process obtain some satisfactory result. But who can tell? And even if I could, it is quite certain that nothing reasonable could make my friend Paulus work as he does for his own views; for it is precisely the absurd and illogical parts of his scheme that act most powerfully upon him, and I can well

believe it is these that enable him to exert the greatest influence upon his disciples. From all I can learn they are mostly slaves from the East and from Gaul—my own slave, Flavus the Briton, whom you will remember, is one—men who are attracted by mysticism, and would be repelled by philosophy. It is possible the sect might become dangerous under other leaders; for I can gather enough of the doctrine to understand that obedience is to be primarily given to the expected deliverer, and in the meantime they are to be true to the society as against everything else. And these are just the materials for dangerous conspiracies.

My parting with Paulus was quite touching. I was getting a little weary of his discourse, and turned the subject to his approaching departure for Spain, expressing my regret that he should be about to undertake a journey to which his age and weakness apparently made him unequal. He began to answer me in a rather lofty strain, dwelling upon the duty that was imposed upon him of preaching his new faith in regions where it was yet unknown, and offering to other nations the opportunity of qualifying themselves for the privileges of the coming kingdom. And then suddenly he broke down, and began to weep—thanking me for my sympathy and good wishes, and contrasting them with the treatment he had experienced at the hands of some of the members of the society. He said that he felt the end of his labours to be near, but that he could look forward to death, not only with calmness, but confidence—since whenever he died he should in the world of shades be united, not only to Jesus, but to those whom he had loved, and who had gone

before, and should, after a short interval, return in some pneumatic body to resume his life on earth, in a new *æon*. But that he could not endure the persistent hostility of the leaders of the society, and the desertion of the very men whom he had induced to join it. Always, he said, it had been the same. No single man had preached Jesus more widely or more successfully than himself; but so soon as he had succeeded in forming a school in any place, emissaries had been despatched from the leaders in Jerusalem (I think he said one Jacobus, a brother of Jesus, was the chief), who represented him as irregular and unauthorized, and insisted upon obedience to some Jewish coremonies as the condition of membership; so that he must either cause a permanent division in the body, to which he was most averse, or must relinquish the field to them. This he had done in many previous instances, not altogether unwillingly, since his business was to sow the seed, leaving to others the after labours of the husbandman, (this is the precise figure that he used;) but that as he was getting older and more feeble he felt a need of friendship and support, and could not but desire some asylum in which he might rest when further labour became impossible. Even now he sometimes doubted whether he had strength for the inevitable toils and privations of his proposed journey, and could sometimes wish that it had been possible for him to remain in Rome, but that here also he found his presence an occasion of strife. He had many warm friends upon whose aid he could rely, but he would not allow them to provoke enmity for his sake, so that he felt he had no alternative but to depart. I could not help feeling for him, and expressed my

sympathy warmly. He thanked me with a native dignity that never quite deserts him, and then pausing for a moment said that I had seen him in one of those moments of weakness to which the infirmity of his body made him liable, but that I must not judge of him from that, since he was always prepared to do and suffer whatever his God might appoint, assured that he should be endowed with the requisite strength, and be consoled by the presence of Jesus, and by the certain prospect of a speedy union with him. He then blessed me—I was not too proud to receive his blessing—and departed.

I cannot help feeling that there must be something in his belief. It is at least real to himself, and doubtless would be equally real to any one that embraced it. And looking at the actual condition of the world, with such a Cæsar (as men will soon find) and such a senate, and such a people, it is not perhaps difficult to understand the feelings that prompt men who retain some reminiscences of ancient virtue and independence to attach themselves to any dream of future freedom and purity, even though they may feel or fear that it is but a dream. And one can also understand that despair of help from man may drive them to invoke and expect the help of the Gods. But then to what Gods are we to pray? our Jupiter has given to Rome the empire of the world, but has made the Romans subject to—what we see. And as neither Serapis nor Mithras nor Iahbe has been able to protect his worshippers from the common fate, we can hardly look to them. This new deliverer, too, whom Paulus preaches, could not escape the fangs of Pilate; and even now, though a divine God himself, cannot

or will not protect Paulus from imprisonment and persecution. I believe those teachers are right who tell us in all circumstances to do that which becomes our own character, to enjoy with moderation, to suffer with dignity, to allow neither fear nor desire to lead us one step from the straight path, and to trust the event to the power that rules the universe.

There is really a great deal of this in Paulus. He is more than half a philosopher, or perhaps I might say he is a philosopher and something more. But mingled with his philosophy are strange impracticable speculations. He thinks that the commerce of the sexes, in its chastest and most honourable form, has something of impurity about it, and would forbid it, but for a fear of the consequences, which he is too clear-sighted not to perceive. I once asked him half-jestingly what would become of the world if men in general could be persuaded to adopt his views in this respect. He replied quite seriously, that long before there could be any perceptible decrease of numbers Jesus would appear from the sky to establish his kingdom.

I expect you will say that I am a convert to his opinions, and I confess there would be a little truth in the charge. But only a little. For I only agree with him so far as to see that his ethics are pure and elevated, and that the old virtues are capable of being allied with his new doctrines. And I can see also that the peculiar form in which his views are presented, and the hopes with which they are associated, are capable of producing an impression upon many who would be uninfluenced by the most eloquent of our rhetoricians declaiming in

praise of virtue. For Paulus speaks to men of his own class in their own language, and offers to them inducements they are able to appreciate. And who can wonder that in this city of Rome, and in these times, there should be hundreds and even thousands who are weary with present suffering, and ready to listen to any teaching that offers the prospect of a change? Even we should not be sorry to see one, and it may be nearer than we expect. There are strange rumours afloat, and some even are beginning to manufacture portents; but these are matters hardly suitable for the present occasion. Hail and farewell!

## LETTER V.

FROM SEPTIMIUS VARO IN JERUSALEM TO LUCIUS POSTUMIUS AT ROME.

HAIL, etc. It is singular how your letters fall in with my experience; first with regard to your friend Paulus, and now with regard to his opponent, Jacobus: we have within the last few days received warnings against him as mixed up in some conspiracy, and as being one of the most dangerous of the popular leaders. And it seems certain that the party to which he belongs is the same as that originally founded by Jesus, whose brother indeed he is. We are told that the conspiracy has wide ramifications, not only throughout all Palestine, but also among the Jews in every part of the Empire, and even beyond. The chiefs, it is said, have promises of assistance from Jews in Mesopotamia and Parthia, all of whom, upon some concerted signal, are to march to the assistance of their brethren at Jerusalem. Of course there is a great deal of exaggeration in all this; and even if they had all the promises of help of which they talk, and could rely upon their fulfilment, the number of men capable of bearing arms in any one place would be too small to be of any importance in the event of a rising. But that will not prevent the expectation of aid from these various quarters proving a great encouragement to revolt, and making their resistance more protracted

and desperate. So I have no doubt we shall have plenty of work to do when the time comes.

I think I told you that I was in expectation of being able to procure some writings of this sect, which would give the information you seek as to the mode of its formation, as well as its tenets and objects. But I have been disappointed. They either have none, or they keep them entirely to themselves: probably the latter. I have therefore begged Sabinus to endeavour to learn from some of the high priest's party what they know upon the subject. He says that he has occasionally enquired, but that the Nazarenes, or Galileans, for they are known by both names, belong almost exclusively to the lowest part of the population; and as members are only initiated at their secret meetings, and their signs and pass-words are only known to each other, it is difficult to learn anything precise about them. The society is supported by the contributions of the initiated from all parts, and there are strange tales of the means taken to compel payment of the allotted quota. Some members are reported to have been put to death at their meetings. There is now, he is told, an organized system almost as effectual as our taxation, and with the spread of the society the burthen upon individuals has become less; but in their early days it was necessary to have a system of terrorism, and no violence was spared which was thought necessary. It is of course impossible to say how much of these reports is true; for the superstition and hatred of mankind by which the sect is charactised, as they incline one to credit these accusations, also furnish plausible excuses for inventing them. But certainly they are quite probable.

You have told me nothing of the scandal as to the new Cornelia and her jewels. L. Junius, who was here a few days since, on his way to Damascus, was full of it, and from what he says, your old friend P. Horatius was mixed up in the affair, and hardly extricated himself with honour. Possibly, however, he felt himself at a safe distance from Italy, and therefore at liberty to exaggerate. The best news that he brought me was that it is probable our quarters will soon be changed. Almost any place must be better than this; for surely no people can be worse to live amongst than the Jews. Even the Britons, in spite of their climate, must be preferable. Hail and farewell!

## LETTER VI.

FROM SEPTIMIUS VARO AT JERUSALEM TO LUCIUS POSTUMIUS AT ROME.

HAIL, etc. After all, I am under unexpected obligations to you; for the enquiries I have prosecuted for your sake have actually been the means of introducing me to a Jew who is at once a philosopher and liberal. And from what he says, I fancy there are a great many among his countrymen who entertain similar views, though they are compelled very much to keep their opinions to themselves. His name is Josephus, and he is a nephew of that Ananus who is so often mentioned in the extracts from the journal of Paulinus which I sent you, and he is a near relative also of another Ananus, the high priest. Of course he is circumcised, and he won't eat pork, but he excuses himself for his abstinence with so much grace and so sensibly that one cannot feel offended. The Jews in general regard us as little better than swine ourselves, because we have no objection to eat the flesh of the animal; and I am inclined to believe that one circumstance outweighs in their minds all our other points of superiority. Josephus admits that it is only a prejudice, but it is so interwoven with the traditions of the people, and has become so intimate a part of the national senti-

ment, that it would be almost like treason to his ancestry if in this respect he were to depart from their customs. And, as he says, if it is innocent to partake of the food, it cannot be hurtful to abstain from it, so long as he makes his friends understand that his abstinence is not intended to imply any censure upon their indulgence. I fancy his liberality is in fact the consequence of his having been taken when he was young to Alexandria, where he not only met with the less exclusive men of his own race, but also had an opportunity of becoming familiar with the philosophy of the schools of that city.

I told you that I had applied to Sabinus, begging him to enquire among the party of the High Priest if he could gain any information as to the circumstances attending the establishment of the sect of the Nazarenes. Calling upon him one morning, upon this and other matters, I found my new friend there. He was discussing some question of administration, with a view to the relaxing of some regulations which he conceives keep alive a feeling of irritation, without in any way making our position more secure; and I was struck with the justice of his views, and the clearness with which they were expressed. Sabinus listened attentively to him, and promised that his views should be duly represented to head-quarters. Then turning to me, he said that probably there was no person who could more effectually help me in the investigation I was anxious to make. Josephus then very courteously expressed his willingness to supply any information of which I might stand in need, so far as his own means extended, or he could procure the necessary particulars from others. Upon this I told him that I had

been commissioned by a friend in Rome to learn all I could with regard to the sect originally founded by that Jesus who was crucified under Pilatus, and in order to secure his interest gave him a sketch of the circumstances that had led you to turn your attention to the subject. This brought on a long conversation on the spot, and this again many subsequent interviews, and the result has been a close intimacy and a warm friendship between us. At my request he has drawn up for you a short statement of the history of the sect, so far as it is known, which I send by the same messenger that brings this. You will see that he regards it as the most dangerous of all the associations at present existing in the country. However, you will see all this in his report, and I need not weary you by repeating what he says. I shall be glad to be out of the place, and I hope that my next letter may be sent from some new quarters. Hail and farewell!

## ON THE SECT OF THE NAZARENES.

I need not relate to you the causes which led to the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, since with these you have already been made acquainted. Subsequent enquiries, however, have shown that his proceedings were not, as was believed at the time, the result of his own independent projects, but were connected with a conspiracy of which he was probably the unconscious instrument. The province of Galilee, of which he was a native, had for many years been a focus of disaffection; though perhaps it only differed from the rest of the country by showing its feelings a little more openly. Ever since the

revolt under Judas the Galilean, there has been an almost universal spirit of insubordination ready at any moment to break out into act, and which has led the populace to welcome any pretender who appealed to the old beliefs of the nation. So long as the first Herod reigned, the people submitted, not always in silence, for many of his acts provoked a tumultuous remonstrance, but at least without any organized opposition. For though it is most probable that he was of Idumæan descent, his courtiers represented him to be a Hebrew of the dispersion; and the people witnessing his power and magnificence were ready to accept this story, and to see in him the predicted king who was to restore the national greatness. When he died, however, and his dominions were parcelled out among his sons, any such belief was scarcely possible; and when Archelaus was banished, and a Roman procurator appointed, and still more when Quirinius ordered the general enrolment of the people, the whole nation was roused, as though submission to the decree were treason to Iahbe. This feeling has never really died out, though there have been periods in which it has apparently slumbered; but it was peculiarly active at the time when Jesus came forward. Of his early life little is known. He was a carpenter, whose father had died while he was yet young, leaving several children. Jesus was the eldest; but the real head of the family was Jacobus, the second son, a man of rare energy and ability in all practical matters, but not gifted with eloquence. When John the Baptist, who was afterwards put to death by Herod Antipas, left Galilee to begin preaching in the desert, he was accompanied by Jesus, who remained with him till his seizure,

when he disappeared for a time, but shortly afterwards reappeared in Galilee at the head of a small body of disciples, most of whom had been his own fellow-disciples with John. He did not, however, as John had done, attempt to form any society, but confined himself to preaching. It was nevertheless impossible to allow him to continue to stir up the people; and when John was detected in communicating with him, and was beheaded in consequence, an attempt was made to seize Jesus also. He had, however, received timely warning, and escaped to some secret asylum.

It is impossible to trace his movements at this time. We have since ascertained that several leading men had entered into an alliance with Aretas, who was eager to avenge the affront put upon him by Herod Antipas in divorcing his daughter, and were to take the first opportunity of exciting an armed rising of the people, when he would join them. For this purpose they intended to avail themselves of the feast of the Passover, when tens of thousands of Jews from various countries are present in Jerusalem, and they relied upon the interest which attached to Jesus to help them. Their representations had a great share in determining his visit to Jerusalem at the time, but it is probable that they concealed from him the part he was expected to take, since his ultimate conduct was one of the chief causes of the failure of the conspiracy. He entered Jerusalem indeed as king of the Jews, but he refused to arm his followers, or to ally himself with any party, and the whole affair collapsed. He was accordingly betrayed and crucified.

No very long time after his crucifixion, a report

reached the Sanhedrim, that the immediate followers of Jesus were forming a society in his name, alleging that he had been raised from the dead, but no importance was attached to the circumstance, and no enquiries were instituted at the time. Afterwards, when the proceedings of the new sect were forced upon the attention of the authorities, the opportunity had been lost, and nothing satisfactory could be discovered. Two of the conspirators had, on the evening of the execution, obtained from Pilatus permission to take possession of the dead body, which they did ostensibly for the purpose of burial. What were their subsequent proceedings is unknown. All that we could learn was, that his mother and another woman who had accompanied him from Galilee, and who were present at the interment, afterwards on visiting the tomb found it empty; and they were said to have asserted that they saw some angelic messenger, who told them that he had risen from the dead. Whether he had not really died, and had been restored by those who took him down from the cross—or whether it was a mere hallucination on the the part of the women—or whether the whole affair was a cleverly contrived imposture, it is impossible to say. The first suggestion seems perhaps the most natural, but I do not myself regard it as the true explanation; for if so, there would have surely been something heard of him, wherever he might be taken; and besides this, no one, if he had actually seen him alive could have believed that he had died. And I think the last is equally inadmissible; for there could not at the moment have been any motive for such a trick. No one could have supposed that the

belief could be propagated. I therefore conclude it must have been a delusion on the part of the women, shared by some of the leaders, who, in the excitement of the moment, were easily able to persuade themselves that they also had seen some appearance of their lost master. To men who, like ourselves, do not believe in the resurrection of the dead body—though we may hope that our spirits will survive the separation which we call death—the whole story is of course incredible; but not so to those who entertain such a belief. And after all, there is nothing more wonderful in the belief that the Messiah should have been raised from the dead, than in the belief that a carpenter, a man whom many of them had known from his childhood, was the Messiah, and that as such he would be able by his supernatural power to expel the Romans from Judæa, and establish himself upon its throne as the visible representation of God. He would have an endless task who attempted to account upon rational grounds for all the marvels believed among the populace, or among their rulers.

The belief in the resurrection of Jesus was associated with a belief that he would almost immediately return from heaven, whither he was assumed to have ascended, and establish his kingdom in Jerusalem. And when this was done, those whom he had selected as his immediate followers would of course be raised to positions of authority, and all who had given up anything for the sake of the society would be correspondingly rewarded. It was needless therefore to acquire or to save. Nothing indeed was requisite but the means of subsistence for the short period that had to elapse before the kingdom

was founded. And these means were to be provided by the dedication of all the private property of the members to the support of the society. There is great obscurity resting upon the proceedings of the society at the time; for, in truth, no one attached any importance to the subject; but so far as I can ascertain there were attempts on the part of some of the members to escape this obligation, and severe measures on the part of the leaders to enforce it, leading in more than one instance to assassination of the recusant members. Rumours of these proceedings reached the Sanhedrim; but such was the secrecy in which they were involved, that nothing effectual could be done. Simon and John, two of the principal leaders, were arrested; but no evidence could be procured against them, and they were discharged; for, in the temper of the populace at the time, it would not have been safe to condemn them, excepting upon the clearest evidence.

In consequence, however, of the dissatisfaction excited in the body, many of the more influential members seceded, and there seemed a probability that it would be broken up, when new life was infused into it by the accession of that Jacobus of whom I have before spoken, the brother of Jesus. His motives for holding himself aloof from the movement in the first instance, and for afterwards joining it, are unknown. It is said that Jesus appeared to him in Galilee, where he had been residing, and ordered him to proceed to Jerusalem to join the society, and it is quite probable that this was alleged as his motive, and possible also that he believed it; but it is just as likely that he remained apart until he thought the time had come to make his co-operation essential

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and thus to give him the leadership he wanted. Certainly with his arrival the whole aspect of affairs was changed. The nominal leadership remained for a time with Simon and John, and with another Jacobus, who was afterwards put to death by Herod Agrippa; but the real authority soon passed into his hands. He appears to have given definiteness to their purpose, and to have improved and completed their organization. Before he had joined them, the only bond of union had been their belief in the immediate reappearance of Jesus, and under this belief it was needless to take any thought for the morrow, since that very morrow might witness his coming. But it is clear that the belief, however powerful, could not be permanently efficacious. Day by day the resources of the society were becoming exhausted, and their enthusiasm was wearing itself out in the same proportion. And this process was being hastened by the unscrupulous means of coercion employed by the leaders. In a short time from his arrival all this was changed. The society was reorganised apparently on a new basis. The co-operation of the members was brought within narrower limits. They were not excluded from a share in the government, but they no longer possessed the initiation, and only intervened when invited to do so by the leaders. At the same time affiliated societies were formed throughout Judæa and Galilee, and among the Jews in Syria, Asia, Egypt, Cyrene, Cyprus, and elsewhere, under heads who were appointed by the chiefs in Jerusalem; and a more practical spirit was infused into the body. And it is only just to say that, as far as we can learn, the leaders have uniformly enforced obedience

to the law, equality among the members, mutual affection and help, and the rigid practice of chastity, temperance, and justice. The ceremony of initiation is by immersion, and the candidates for initiation are required to profess a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and in his resurrection and reappearance; and this of course implies an obligation to rise against the Romans whenever the leaders may announce that this reappearance is at hand.

The most important change introduced by Jacobus appears, however, to have been this, that inasmuch as it was impossible to say when Jesus would reappear, it was incumbent upon the members of the society to continue their ordinary avocations, instead of abandoning them, as had been previously the case. This change secured the permanence of the society, which must otherwise have speedily died out. It not only provided for the subsistence of the members without the necessity of stripping every new convert of his substance, but it legitimated that delay in the appearance of Jesus which was beginning to weaken the belief of many, and enabled all to wait for the event with less impatience. At the same time, all are expected to contribute according to their means to the funds of the society, which are devoted to the support of the leaders and of the poor.

On the whole, the sect is popular. They are very scrupulous in the observance of the Jewish law; and the great majority of the people, though they do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, or expect his reappearance, would be only too glad to be convinced that they were mistaken. Any one, whether human or divine, or, I fear, diabolic, who would afford them the means of regaining their

independence, and wreaking their vengeance upon their foreign rulers, would be welcome, and Jesus as welcome as any. And though a few of the more rigid appear to hold that Jesus, when he returns, will not admit any into his kingdom, unless they have been duly admitted into the society, this is not, I fancy, the general opinion, or that of the leaders. No one can be a member of the society without passing through the regular ceremonies, and I have no doubt that they expect to bear the chief places of dignity in the new kingdom, and possibly to form a privileged class there; yet they admit that it will include every faithful Hebrew. The people in general look upon them as harmless enthusiasts, and some of the more far-seeing recognize the probability that in any outbreak they may become useful instruments or allies.

It is understood that for several years the rule which only permitted the initiation of Jews has been relaxed, and that there are tens of thousands of members who are not Jews in different places. The Paulus of whom your friend speaks was one of the most active agents of the society, and I believe very successful. He was, however, charged with various mal-practices. Once he introduced a member who was not circumcised to one of their meetings in this city. It is difficult for you to realize the scandal that this would occasion among the more rigid of our people, as these Nazarenes for the most part are. I believe you have in Rome some mysteries which can only be shared by women. If you imagine what would be the effect of introducing a man to one of their assemblies, you can understand the sensation caused by this. It is impossible to say what would have been the

consequences if the man had not at once submitted to the rite. And since then he has been charged with allowing those whom he has initiated to frequent the temples of your Gods, and to live in open immorality. And when challenged for this conduct, he denied the authority of the leaders at Jerusalem, and claimed entire independence. I believe there was some talk of expelling him, but I fancy he is too useful in filling the coffers of the society, and that when the question could no longer be postponed he made some sort of submission. The last act charged against him was that of introducing an uncircumcised brother into the temple itself, but I cannot imgaine he would be guilty of such an unmeaning folly. It is, however, generally believed here; and his life would not be safe for an hour if he were to return.

At the present moment the society is compact and well organized, numbering several thousands in Jerusalem, and having ramifications in almost every city. I regard it as one of the most dangerous of all the sects into which our people are divided. Jacobus is an able, resolute man, and I expect that the next popular movement in Jerusalem will see him at its head.

## LETTER VII.

FROM FLAVUS, OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF LUCIUS POSTUMIUS AT ROME, TO RUFINUS OF CORINTH.

BROTHER dearly beloved. Grace be unto you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. We have suffered a grievous loss. Our father Paul has left us, and we know not if we shall ever see his face again. I went with him to Ostia, with three more of the brethren—alone out of all—and saw him on board of the ship that was to take him to Spain. He was resigned and even cheerful; for he felt that God had opened a way to him to carry out his long-cherished purpose of preaching the Gospel of the kingdom in a new field, where he would not indeed be the first, any more than he had been at Rome, but where he might win new converts, and teach new truths. But it was sad to see him depart with no other companion than Eubolus, who is weak at least, if he is not faithless. But I cannot go. I am not free; and even if I were, I know not if I should possess the requisite courage and constancy. It may be that the same God who has called me to the knowledge of his Son would endue me with strength equal to my trials; but I should fear my own weakness, and I know not that I could rely upon receiving the needful supply of strength;

for my faith might fail: even now it is often faint and feeble, and I fear to put it to the proof. When I see one like Paul driven forth, and men like Matthæus and Ptolemæus lording it over the heritage of God, I feel it difficult to believe that all things do work together for good to those who love the Father and believe upon his Son, as our revered Paul taught. And yet it is written, that when the ungodly prosper, it is only that they may be the more surely cut down; and it may be so here.

Our dear father was greatly comforted in his departure by the belief that he had not laboured in vain to bring to a knowledge of the truth my lord Lucius. I pray fervently that it may be so; but it is not easy for one who is rich and free and happy to believe in him who was crucified. My master would, I believe, be quite willing to renounce those who are worshipped as gods, but are no gods, but not to abandon all reliance upon his own strength and virtue, and to accept salvation as the free gift of God through his Son. He is of the sect of the Stoics, and holds that it is the duty of all men to practise virtue, and to subdue the body, and to endure suffering, and to despise pleasure, without regard to the consequences—looking to no other reward than the approval of his own conscience. He is to be sufficient for himself, needing no outward encouragement or support; and this may be enough so long as he has no deep grief to endure, and no irreparable loss to mourn; but if he is called upon to suffer—if his love is betrayed, or his dearest friends are torn from him by death—he may feel the need of some help, and, remembering what he has heard, may be led to seek it in Jesus; and then he may, as I do, bless

the sorrow that led him to the knowledge of the one true God manifested in his Son Jesus the Christ, and made him a partaker of his grace. God be thanked for all my sufferings. Not otherwise should I have become by baptism a member of the body of Christ and an heir of his kingdom. Truly he hath poured oil and wine into my wounds.

But, alas! my brother, how many are the temptations that beset us! and how difficult it is to preserve an unwavering faith in the promises of our Lord! Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? when shall we hear the sound of the trumpet that calls us to meet him in the air? We are waiting, and we strive to be patient and vigilant, but it is not easy to shut out doubt and weariness. Surely the day cannot be long delayed; but so have said and felt many who have already fallen asleep, and I sometimes feel that I too shall pass away before the coming of that great day of the Lord. Nevertheless the will of the Lord be done!

I know that our father Paul doubts whether that day is as near as was at first believed. During our journey to Ostia I told him of the doubts and fears I felt on the subject, and he then said that the more he saw of the small number of those who believed, in comparison with those who had never even heard of the glad tidings, the more he was convinced that time would be afforded to allow every one at least to receive the message. Once indeed he was so impressed with the mighty progress of the word, that it seemed a small thing to expect that all things should be ready for the return of Jesus within a few years or even months. Now, however, seeing the hindrances arising from the errors of the brethren, and from

the opposition of the world, and finding that there were myriads to whom the Gospel had never been preached, his feelings were no longer the same. God indeed might change the hearts of the nations, and make them ready to accept of the salvation that had been purchased for them by the death and resurrection of Jesus, but that until this was done he feared that the faithful were premature in looking for his appearance, and he exhorted us to pray earnestly that whatever hinders the outpouring of the Spirit of God might be removed. Even so, O Father! May thy kingdom come in the hearts of men, that thy Christ may return to reign visibly among them, and may we remain to the day of his coming!

I fear that there are among us some whose impatience at the unforeseen delay may lead them to dangerous and even criminal actions. The news of the murder of Jacobus, the Lord's brother, has exasperated them, and they believe it to be a sign of the immediate appearance of Jesus. It may be; for we know that he said that the slaughter of the faithful should be among the tokens of his coming. And therefore it becomes us to be sober and watchful, in order that he may find us ready. But we are not to cease to be patient, and I fear that some of these have not that faith which brings forth patience. I told Aquila that if the coming of Jesus was as near as he professed to believe, there could be no need of action on his part; for vengeance would then at once overtake the oppressors. But he replied that just on that account it behoved all of us to act our part, so that when the Lord came he might find us not only ready to do his work, but actually doing it. And I dread lest some act of

violence or indiscretion on their part might draw down upon us the anger of Cæsar. Even as it is, the multitude regard us with dislike and suspicion. They look upon us as Jews, and even as the worst sort of Jews. Our worship of the one true God is held to be atheism, and our refusal to join in their idolatrous rites as the lowest superstition. Hitherto our peaceful behaviour, and the favour with which parts of our doctrines are regarded by some men of influence, have secured us the protection of the magistrates; but if once this is forfeited, and the people are no longer restrained, it is impossible to say to what extremities their hatred may carry them, and Cæsar himself might take the lead. I can do little but pray, and I beseech your prayers also. Our times and seasons are in the hands of God our Father, and we know that when separated from the body we shall be joined to Jesus. And perhaps, as our beloved Paul taught, that may be better. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Farewell.

## LETTER VIII.

FROM SEPTIMIUS VARO AT CÆSAREA TO LUCIUS POSTUMIUS AT ROME.

HAIL, etc. You will have heard of the death of Porcius Festus. It was very sudden at last, but not altogether unexpected. We had been moved to Cæsarea a very short time before his death, and there was a very small force left in Jerusalem. The Jews seized the opportunity furnished by the weakness of the garrison and the death of the Procurator to organize a sedition, and there is no saying how far it might have gone if the High Priest Ananus had not exercised a vigour beyond the law by seizing two or three of the ringleaders, and having them put to death. Among them was Jacobus, the brother of Jesus, and leader of the sect of the Nazarenes, so that he has now no chance of playing the part that my friend Josephus prophesied for him. The act has of course created a great sensation. Every one was disposed to approve of it at first; but now that the danger is past, people begin to shake their heads, and to talk of it as a violation of law, the assumption of an unauthorized power, an interference with the peculiar prerogative of Cæsar, whom Ananus did not represent, and a dozen other things of the same kind. And I dare say they are right.

At least, I am no legist, and cannot contradict them if they are not. But, plain soldier as I am, I know this, that a few days' or perhaps even hours' delay would have endangered the safety of the garrison, and have allowed a flame to be kindled which it might have taken months to extinguish; and Ananus deserves well of the state for taking upon himself the responsibility of the requisite measure.

The change to this place is in many respects an improvement. We have at least shows and theatres, and the better class of the people are well disposed and hospitable. The Greeks welcome our presence, as it enables them to hold their own against the Jews; for the place is in a state of chronic dissension between the Jewish inhabitants and the rest of the citizens, in which it is difficult to say which is most wrong. At present I am disposed to believe that the balance inclines to the side of the Greeks, and that the Jews, feeling their comparative weakness, would be glad to remain at peace, if permitted. And they are most vehement in their complaints and protestations. But I am quite sure that if they were the stronger party, they would be more violent and aggressive than the Greeks now are. Their complaints, consequently, and their present professions of peace and loyalty, remind one of the proverb as to the Gracchi denouncing sedition. But it is not impossible they may be able to produce some effect with the Emperor, unless what we hear of their conduct at Rome should have prejudiced him against them; for they are pertinacious and plausible, and they have friends in high quarters, and they know how to purchase favour by seasonable gifts and services; and they hang

together like one man against everybody who does not belong to them. I would far rather be what I am than procurator; for I have nothing to fear so long as I obey orders. And that is more than he can say. Hail and farewell!

## LETTER IX.

FROM LUCIUS POSTUMIUS AT ROME TO SEPTIMIUS VARO AT CÆSAREA.

HAIL, etc. I have only just returned from Lugdunum, where I was sent to examine into the measures that are being taken for the restoration of the city, and I found your two last letters awaiting me on my arrival. I am, at any rate, pleased to learn that your kindness in helping me in my enquiries has brought with it something in the way of reward. Virtue is no doubt to be followed for its own sake; but though the virtuous man is to be indifferent to the advantages with which its practice is associated, spectators may congratulate him upon the harvest he reaps. And you will be more lenient in your judgment of my friendship with Paulus. Poor fellow! I have heard nothing of him since our last interview, and it is very possible that his bones are whitening by the side of some unfrequented stream or on some desert coast.

I had no heart to write to you about P. Horatius. He was madly in love with a worthless woman, and, as might be expected, made a fool of himself, and I fear, if the truth is told, even something worse. But love is a madness like anger. And the very intensity of his passion, and his utter abandonment to her behests while under its influence,

brought about a reaction sooner than I or any of his friends had dared to hope. He is now nearly sane, and already he has made all the reparation that was possible under the circumstances. Possibly he will never quite efface the stain in the eyes of the world; but to those who know all the circumstances, the frankness of his acknowledgment of error, and the sincerity of his repentance, shown by the completeness of his amends, testify far more to his intrinsic nobleness, than his lapse into error under the circumstances can to his weakness. I feel that I should never have known the greatness of which he was capable, but for the very acts by which he was for the time disgraced. Still I cannot bear to dwell on the details, nor is it necessary. I am quite sure that nothing was lost in the story you heard from L. Junius; and from what I know of him, he would tell the story truthfully enough in substance, though his love of effect might lead him to colour the details. And besides, I am not yet in a position to give you Horatius's own version of the affair. The ashes still glow.

There are fresh rumours with regard to the Jews. It is said that their doctrines, possibly in the modified form in which they are taught by Paulus, have gained some adherents in the palace, and even that our friend of the fig-tree has become a convert. One would have no right to be surprised at anything from him; for I know that he was initiated into the mysteries of Mithras, and I believe he was also into those of Isis, and the same restless curiosity might lead him to wish to learn the tenets of this new worship; but perhaps it is only this known readiness to fall in with every fresh form of superstition that has been

the occasion of the report. And yet the interference of the Empress, with whom, through his daughter, he has influence, in favour of Paulus, gives a colour to the story. Certainly she knew nothing of Paulus herself, and this perhaps is the most likely channel through which she could be influenced. But one does not care to attempt to unravel these matters, which can scarcely be approached without incurring suspicion. However willing men might be to peril life and fortune for some worthy object, there is a natural reluctance to peril either by taking a part in the miserable intrigues of the day, and still more to provoke hostility by needless comments on events which probably only originate in caprice. So I listen with all the apathy I can command to whatever stories may be told me, and say as little as possible.

So far, however, as the Jews are concerned, I believe it to be true that serious warnings have reached the Prætor from more than one quarter, and I should not be surprised to hear of another decrée of banishment. It seems that some recent proceedings in Jerusalem, among which was the act of vigour on the part of the High Priest that pleased you so much, have exasperated them, and they talk of doing something here to avenge it. And of course they dare not attempt to do it openly, their numbers are too contemptible to allow them to dream of such a project. But they are united and unscrupulous. Those who know them best trust them least; for though brave enough and ready at any moment to brave death in the prosecution of their schemes, they are restrained by no feelings of humanity or gratitude. Even here, where as long as they are peaceful they are protected by the law, and upon as

favoured a footing as any other subject race, they have always shown that they consider themselves as dwelling in an enemy's country, and they have almost uniformly taken part in any movement that might injure the Empire. And just now they are especially dangerous; for whether they believe in Jesus or not, I am assured that they are all looking forward to the immediate appearance of some deliverer, and are ready, upon the slightest rumour of his having appeared, to facilitate his progress by incendiarism and murder, I fancy, if needful. And it is said, though from what I saw of Paulus I have some doubts of this, that those who have joined the sect of the Nazarenes, or, as they are beginning to be called, Christians, are the most uncompromising and violent. Of course no one would attach the least importance to all this, if their designs were avowed, or even if, when the time for action came, they would rise openly. A revolt of the gladiators would be tenfold more dangerous. But it is secret assassination, or the burning of the Capitol or the palace, that we have to fear; and against these no precautions can be sufficient. It was well for Paulus that he was out of the city before these rumours gathered strength. I fear that otherwise he would not have been allowed to depart.

Q. Rubilius, who has recently returned from Egypt, has brought with him a copy of a Greek translation of the sacred books of the Jews, and has lent me some of the rolls. They display a strange mixture of sublimity and childishness. Their descriptions of the character of their God are often noble and elevated, but the conduct they attribute to him is almost on the level of our lowest

popular superstitions. He eats and drinks with his worshippers, walks about and talks to them, and is flattered, angry, and jealous. And though they represent him as the God of the whole earth, above all other gods, he is solely occupied with the care of the Jews, and even them he cannot always protect, though he does sometimes avenge. It is the old story which we have seen over and over again in the popular legends. The God is endowed, in the language of his worshippers, with all power and virtue; but when he is made to embody these qualities in action, he is brought even below the level of the men with whom he has to deal. In one respect, however, the Jews appear to be notably superior to our legend-mongers. Their God is never brought into any sensual relations with women, so that one is not shocked by such tales as those with which our old fables abound, when the father of the gods appears now as the deceiver, and now as the dupe, of a woman, and equally contemptible in either capacity. But, on the other hand, if he is above the allurements of pleasure, he is equally deaf to the voice of pity. Nothing can exceed the atrocity of some of the actions that he commands. I don't wonder at any cruelty or treachery on the part of the Jews, if such are the lessons they are taught. I suppose the better class among the Jews—among others, your new friend—have no more belief in these stories than we in the corresponding marvels told of our gods. The wonder is, how rational beings could have invented such absurdities; but I suppose the answer would be, that on the side of religion man is not rational. He wants something, not that shall satisfy his reason, but that

shall appeal to his imagination and his feelings. On these subjects, however, speculation is illimitable, while our lives have very narrow limits. But where action is forbidden it is only natural that we should dream.

Don't you think you have served long enough in the provinces? I long to see you again; for there are many topics upon which I cannot write, but which I should like to discuss with you. And I want your company. Hail, and farewell!

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Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018